Connecting you to your community since 1843

THURSDAY, November 13, 2025

The Courier Leader

75¢

•SERVING PAW PAW • LAWTON • MATTAWAN • LAWRENCE • GOBLES • VAN BUREN COUNTY

Volume 8, Issue 46 wilcoxnewspapers.com • 269-657-3072 USPS 564-620

ICONIC MERSON STORE SUCCUMBS TO FIRE

By Gari Voss

The call came to Gobles Pine Grove Fire Chief Brian Cronk at 5:58am that smoke was pouring from the northwest section of Merson Store at M-40 and 102nd Avenue. By the time Gobles Pine Grove and Allegan Fire Departments arrived a little after 6am, the store was engulfed in flames and moving fast with smoke too thick for any visibility.

"This is an old building," stated Fire Chief Brian Cronk. "There was a lot of plastic and merchandise."

"The aging structure, plastic, foam, and merchandise make a huge fuel load," explained Allegan Fire Chief Nick Brink.

When the firefighters began arriving, they had to break down doors and use an excavator to peal away the metal roof for better access.

The operation required six fire departments on site. Gobles, Allegan, Gun Plain, Otsego and Bloomingdale Fire Departments brought tankers. With no fire hydrants in rural areas, the departments rely on tankers to bring water from nearby lakes. Bloomingdale had the equipment to load the tankers from the fill-site on Baseline Lake. Water was pumped from the tankers into the dump tank that was erected in the intersection.

Because of the early morning hour, involving the number of fire departments was imperative. In addition to the tankers and equipment, Lee Fire Department was called to bring their ladder truck. Add Gobles' pumper, squad, and pickups, the only piece that was absolutely necessary was the volunteers.

"This is a difficult time of day for responders," shared Chief Cronk. "Some are just getting off work and others are headed to work. We are fortunate that some companies understand when workers are leaving early or arriving late for work."

"One rule we try to follow is to have enough people to cover the first group of firefighters and provide backup to give breaks," shared Chief Brink. "The departments send only a few firefighters each to daytime fires, so it was difficult to keep everyone fresh as they fought the fire."

Merson Store at the corner of M-40 and 102nd Avenue caught fire on Wed., Nov. 5, 2025 a little before 6am. Dense smoke made visibility difficult. Traffic was detoured down 102nd Ave to find alternate routes. ***Photo: Dede Lewis***

Firefighters gained access to the store by breaking down doors and peeling back the metal roof. ***Photo: G. Voss***

The initial blaze was out before 10am, but smoke was still coming from sections of the building and had to be completely extinguished. It was after 11am before the last of the fire trucks pulled away from the charred remains of what was Merson Store.

As is his practice with commercial buildings, Chief Cronk called upon the Michigan State Police to do a thorough investigation on the cause of the fire and to speak with the insurance company and owner Larry Luedecking, who had temporarily closed the store several months before after the death of his son.

The neighbors and patrons who relied on the early morning coffee and store favorites expressed their sadness at the loss of the icon that had served the community for over 40 years.

Thanks were given to not only the fire departments at the scene, but the fire departments like Hopkins, Martin, and Paw Paw who covered the stations that had sent equipment and firefighters to fight the blaze, and to the volunteers who responded to the call.

By 10am, four hours after the call was sent to Gobles Pine Grove Fire Chief Brian Cronk that Merson Store had smoke coming from it, firefighters were still working to extinguish areas that still smoldered. Thanks to the many fire departments and tank trucks, water filled the dump tank and was pumped through hoses to douse the fire.

Paw Paw Launches New "Christmas in the Village" Celebration December 12th – 13th

PAW PAW - Paw Paw will sparkle with holiday cheer this season as the community debuts its new Christmas in the Village celebration - two days of festivities, local spirit, and small-town magic.

The event kicks off Friday, Dec. 12, with the Lighted Holiday Parade at 6 p.m. through downtown, led by this year's Grand Marshals, Roman and Ava Plaszczak. Community members, organizations, and businesses are invited to take part - there's still time to sign up at destinationpawpaw.com/christmas-in-the-village-parade-application. The Tree Lighting Ceremony at the Van Buren County Courthouse follows at 6:45 p.m., where Paul DeYoung will be honored with the Community Ambassador Award. Photos with Santa will follow the tree lighting.

Festivities continue Saturday, Dec. 13, with the Rotary 5K Santa Run at 9 a.m. (register at runsignup.com/Race/MI/PawPaw/PawPawRotarySantaRun), Kringle Town on Paw Paw Street from 10 a.m.to 4 p.m., featuring old-world charm and handcrafted gifts in wooden market houses donated by Meyer Wood Products, and the Merry Village Mingle throughout downtown shops.

Families can also enjoy Pictures with Santa at the Carnegie on Saturday from 10 to 4, where children can visit Santa, share their wish lists, and enjoy cookies and cocoa. This is a no-cost family event open to all.

Enjoy wassailing by the Paw Paw Village Players, live ice sculpting sponsored by Destination Paw Paw, and support from the DDA, Chamber of Commerce, Van Buren County Commissioners, the Village of Paw Paw, and many volunteers.

"Christmas in the Village is about bringing our community together to celebrate the magic of the season," said Janice Chittle from Destination Paw Paw. "We're so proud of how many local businesses, volunteers, and organizations came together to make this new holiday tradition possible."

"Christmas in the Village is truly a reflection of what makes Paw Paw so special," said Mary Springer, DDA Coordinator. "This event came together through the hard work of so many - our local businesses, volunteers, and community partners all joining forces to bring something joyful and new to downtown. It's a wonderful example of what can happen when we work together."

For more information, https://www.facebook.com/share/17WW-6Ta3m2/

Do you need help? Write Us!

Mike Wilcox
Owner/Publisher

Every year, as the Christmas season draws near, I'm reminded just how generous our communities can be. For nearly two decades, Wilcox Newspapers has hosted what's become one of my favorite traditions: our Annual Christmas Wish Program.

It started simply enough. We asked readers who were struggling to write in and tell us what would make their Christmas a little brighter. The idea was to connect local families in need with local people who wanted to help. Over the years, it's grown into something truly special—and this year, we're doing it again.

Lately, I've heard from more families than ever who are struggling to make ends meet. The rising cost of everyday necessities, from groceries and gas to rent and utilities, has stretched household budgets thin. It's been a tough year for a lot of people, and many are finding themselves in need of a little extra help just to get by.

If you or your family are going through a difficult time, I encourage you to write to us and be as specific as you can. Tell us about your situation, your family, and how we might help make your holiday a little brighter. Most importantly, explain why you need our help. We prefer you email us at wilcoxnewspapers@gmail.com, but if you don't have access to a computer, you can always mail a letter to P.O. Box 189, Allegan, MI 49010.

Over the years, I've been amazed at the generosity that pours in from our readers and advertisers. One afternoon, while vacuuming our new office, I noticed an envelope on the floor. Inside were ten $100 bills—no note, no name, just a quiet act of kindness from someone who wanted to help. Another time, a donor sent $2,000. Several more gave $1,000 each. For a Scrooge like me, it's humbling to see just how deeply people here care for one another.

Last year alone, we were able to raise more than $20,000 in cash and gifts, helping over 70 families enjoy the holidays. This year, our goal is even higher. We hope to assist at least 100 families within our circulation areas.

I've always believed in the saying, "We take care of our own," and nowhere is that truer than in the communities we serve. So, if you legitimately need help this Christmas, and I stress LEGITIMATELY, please reach out to us. And if you're in a position to give, know that your generosity can change someone's holiday, and maybe their outlook on life, for the better.

SERVICE DIRECTORY

BANGOR MINI STORAGE
31375 52 STREET, BANGOR MICHIGAN 49013
$10 OFF THE MONTH OF OCTOBER
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL
269-674-1330

THE SHED SELF STORAGE
LAWTON, MI
THESHEDSELFSTORAGE.COM
269-200-2156

(269)501-0881
grantdalypainting@gmail.com
BBB A+ Rating
GRANT DALY PAINTING, LLC
"Let me take the pain out of painting"
Quality Work · Reasonable Rates · References
Residential · Commercial · Free Estimates
Interior · Exterior · Dry-wall Repair
Serving Southwest Michigan

ROLLING ACRES MINI BARNS
TOP RATED SHED BUILDER
Outdoor saunas, Sheds & barns,
Greenhouses, Outhouses, Tiny Homes,
Custom Swing Sets
Dog Houses & Chicken Coops, Horse Stables
Business hours
Mon - Sat 8:00am-8:00pm
Sunday Closed
58332 48th Ave, Lawrence, MI 49064
269-363-0599

SCHUITMAKER MORAITIS LAW OFFICE
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
Estate Planning · Real Estate Transactions · Probate · Corporate Law · Municipal Law
(269) 657-3177
www.PawPawLaw.com
181 West Michigan, Suite 1
Paw Paw, MI 49079-0520

EARL SANDERS & SON WELL DRILLING INC.
Since 1943
Trouble with your water well?
Low Pressure?
Smelly Water?
No Water?
269-806-6730
Email: earlsandersinc@hotmail.com

LICENSED & INSURED
GREENSHIELD INSULATION
FREE ESTIMATES!
FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED
(269) 743-3121
Spray Foam | Blown-in Attic snd Wall Insulation | Removals
greenshieldinsulationco.com
MATTAWAN, MI.

HOUSE PAINTING
THE PAINTER
Interior & Exterior Home Painting
Pressure Washing
George
(269) 767-5700

Double M Construction
Serving Southwest Michigan and surrounding areas
Metal Roofing
Complete Pole Barn Packages
Free Estimates
BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS
(269) 762-9920
56504 Butcher Road, Lawrence, MI 49064

Jim's Small Engine
43356 CR 653 Paw Paw MI 49079
Credit Cards Accepted
Chinsaws, mowers, snowblowers
pressure washers, generators, etc.
269-674-9403
Larz Boley
Owner
LLC

OFFICE: 269-375-1425
WESTON SEPTIC, LLC
RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL
• Septic Tank Pumping • Install Risers
NOW HIRING!
Linda & Russ Weston, Owners
BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

Mother Mary's Midwifery Services
(269) 655-7765
mothermarysmidwifery@gmail.com
Serving Southwest MI
RESPECTFUL, EMPOWERING CARE
Honoring bodily autonomy and supporting Informed decision-making
Inclusive care for a diverse clientele
• Offers preconception and prenatal care
• Birth and postpartum care for 6 weeks
• Newborn care for 6 weeks after delivery
• Lactation support
• Car seat education
• Nutrition counseling & child birth education
Home births and birth center options available

Plain Jane's Antiques
269-929-6162
seejaneshop@yahoo.com
DOWNTOWN PAW PAW
229 E. Michigan Ave • Paw Paw, MI 49079
• Vintage • Old Books • Rustic Decor • Rescued Attic • Jewelry • Salvage • Furniture • Garden

Jaqua
SOUTH HAVEN'S TOP REAL ESTATE BROKER, 12 YEARS IN A ROW!
YOUR LAKESHORE REAL ESTATE EXPERT
Amy O'Sullivan
Associate Broker
www.SoldByAmyO.com
C.269.214.1257 | aosullivan@jaquarealtors.com
As seen on HGTV
513 Broadway St
South Haven, MI 49090

mckenziemi.com 269-657-2548
MCKENZIE INSURANCE
Auto-Owners INSURANCE
LIFE • HOME • CAR • BUSINESS
Insurance for what matters most to you, since 1945.

BATES HOME REMODELING
Brent Bates
Bates5601@gmail.com
269-350-3350
Interior Trim
Tuck Pointing
Aluminum Trim
Pre-Hung Doors
Bee Removal
Carpentry
Tile Installed
Concrete Work
Deck Specialist

WALT & MARIE'S COUNTRY MARKET
CATERING & MORE!
• DINE IN • TAKE OUT • PARTY PLATTERS • BUFFET STYLE CATERING •
RENT OUR CAFE FOR YOUR PRIVATE EVENT FOR ONLY $50/HR
• BUSINESS MEETINGS • BIRTHDAY PARTIES • BABY SHOWERS • WEDDINGS • & MORE!
WALT & MARIE'S COUNTRY MARKET
44947 W RED ARROW HWY
PAW PAW, MI
269-657-7570

Wet Basement?
WATERPROOFING CONTRACTORS
• Internal/External Drain Tile Systems
• Water Seepage - Structural Wall & Floor Cracks
• Damp Wet Crawl Spaces
• Bowed & Cracked Walls
• Sump Pump/Emergency Backup System
• Mold Removal & Drywall Repair
24 Hour Emergency Service
Senior Discounts
269-337-7660
EXPERIENCED IN ALL METHODS OF BASEMENT WATERPROOFING

BRINKER BROTHERS OUTDOOR LIVING
CUSTOMIZE YOUR OUTDOOR LIVING
269-806-4141
SERVICES
Azenco Pergolas
MagnaTrack Motorized Screens
Outdoor Kitchens
Decks & Railings
Outdoor Lighting
Endless Outdoor Features
Check out our website to see everything we offer
brinkerbrothersoutdoorliving.com

CAR CONNECTION
AUTO BODY AND SALES
FAMILY OWNED AND OPERATED SINCE 1983
Auto Body • Collision Repair • Insurance Work
Paint • Minor rust repair • Auto sales
Hours of operation • Mon - Fri; 9am to 5pm
22671 Red Arrow Hwy.,Mattawan, MI 49071
269-668-2379 • carconn.abs@gmail.com

OLíVE CART
Curating Noteworthy Flavors
oliveoilstoremichigan.com
424 PHOENIX ST
SOUTH HAVEN, MI
(269) 637-4754
421 STATE ST
ST. JOSEPH, MI
(269) 281-0120

Coastal Clean
housekeeping • home watch • handyman
Family Owned & Serving Southwest Michigan Since 2003
We're in your neighborhood!
• Residential cleaning
• Home Watch Services
• Commercial Cleaning
• Handyman Services
269-639-1515 • coastalclean.net

ROOFING & CONTRACTING
Protecting SW Michigan Properties For Over 20 Years!
ROOFING | SIDING | GUTTERS
269-359-ROOF • aecroof.com • Paw Paw, MI

J&S TREE SERVICES LLC
30 years in business
Free Estimates
Specialize in storm damage
Tree Removal • Tree Trimming
Stump Grinding
269-207-1682
Gobles, MI

LANDSCAPE DESIGN SERVICES
We Design to fit *your* lifestyle.
269-639-9000
www.LandscapeDS.com
A Bakker Family Business since 1968
Lawn Fertilization and Weed Control
Your Local Lawn & Landscape Experts

BOB TOLSMA PLUMBING
Bob Tolsma • 4215 Lincoln Rd., Holland, MI 49423
Office (616)836-1197 • bob@tolsmaplumbing.com
• New Constrution
• Remodels Insured
• Water heaters
• Water Softeners
• Water & Sewer Hookups
• 24 HR Emergency

COUNTY LINE NURSERIES
SINCE 1942
DESIGN AND INSTALL LOCAL PLANT MATERIALS GROWN AT OUR OWN NURSERY
outdoor spaces, paver walks, pergolas
large variety of locally grown trees
decorative shrubs and greenery
new industry leading products
irrigation systems
outdoor kitchens
CALL MIKE AT 269.621.4543
www.CountyLineNurseries.net
Like us on Facebook.
Competitive pricing, cutting out the middleman.
Special discounts for Veterans and Seniors.

Your Local Market Expert
CENTURY 21 Affiliated
25 Years of Real Estate Excellence.
RYAN SERVATIUS
BROKER
Century 21 Affiliated SoHa
253 Center Street
South Haven, MI 49090
EMAIL: INFO@CALLRYAN.COM
CALL OR TEXT: 269.252.7926
WEBSITE: CALLRYAN.COM
Recoginized as Areas Most Awarded Broker

Rent a Water Softener for $35/mo.
Add an RO for only $5/mo more.
* Call for details
Gordon WATER SYSTEMS
269-382-0068

SKP DESIGN
STUDIO + SHOWROOM
Interior Design
110 W. Allegan St.
(M-89) Otsego, MI
269.377.6645
www.skpdesign.com
Sondra@skpdesign.com

2ND FRONT PAGE

Paw Paw Varsity Tennis Coach named Div. 4 Boys Coach of the Year

PAW PAW - Paw Paw High Varsity Tennis Coach Matt Baleja was recently named Michigan High School Tennis Coaches Association Division 4 Boys Coach of the Year, a honor in and of itself. In addition, Coach Baleja also received recognition as the 2025 State Tennis Coach of the Year across all regional divisions by the association.

Under Coach Baleja's leadership, the Red Wolves Varsity Tennis Team recently capped off an outstanding season with a record of 9-1-3, finishing second in the Wolverine Conference, just one point behind Sturgis. The team continued with its strong performance and finished second at the regional tournament, earning a spot at the MHSAA (Michigan High School Athletic Association) State Finals where they finished 11th overall - the best finish in school history.

"This is a well-deserved honor for an outstanding leader on and off the court. Congratulations, Coach Baleja! Your family, friends, players, and the entire Paw Paw Red Wolves pack could not be more proud of all that you've accomplished," the press release concluded.

USA triathlon champion hails from South Haven

By James Windell

With the USA Triathlon Multisport Championship Festival coming to South Haven next spring, one of the contestants is already a national champion.

Jay Campbell has made a significant mark in the triathlon community, recently winning the Barron Lake Triathlon in Niles, Michigan, and previously earning the title of three-time national champion. This distinction places him among the elite age-group triathletes in the U.S.

Campbell, who is coached by Dawn Hinz, also of South Haven, won two of his three national championships in Dallas, Texas, in 2023. Since then, he has retained his ranking as a duathlete and triathlete.

In a recent interview in his home gym where he does much of his training, Campbell explained his national championships at The 2023 Texasman Triathlon, held in Dallas. He said that he competed in the Olympic-distance triathlon and won his age group division. While he didn't mention it, winning this event showcased his endurance and versatility across all three disciplines – running, biking and swimming.

"The first one that I won was what they call Sprint Duathlon," he said. "This is where you run and you bike and then do another run. The distances in that event are first a 5k run, followed by a 20k bike race, and then finish with a 3.3 k race."

Then he participated in the Olympic Duathlon, which required a 10k run, followed by a 40k bike race and ending with a 5k run. Campbell again finished first among men ages 70 to 74.

Also in the summer of 2023, he won the Sprint Triathlon, which was held in Milwaukee, and consisted of a .75k swim, a 20k biking event, and a 5k run in Milwaukee.

Working out regularly in his home gym on his exercise bike and lifting weights in the off season, Campbell says he also trains in the Bronson swimming pool under the direction of Hinz.

"My swimming is okay," he concedes, "but I'm not the greatest swimmer. I usually have to catch up after the swim."

He says he met Dawn Hinz by accident when they were both biking on the Kal-Haven Trail. "I was out biking on the Kal-Haven Trail, and I ran into her," he recalls. "I noted that she had on an Athletics Mentor jersey and I knew Athletic Mentors had coaches, so I asked her if she knew a swim coach because that's what I needed to work on. She said she could do that. But I decided to do the whole coaching package, so she coaches me for biking, swimming and running. But that's taken me to that next level."

He says that Hinz has helped him to make sure every workout is purposeful and targeted to strengthening his skills in one of the three areas of swimming, biking or running.

Campbell grew up in Kalamazoo, but says he wasn't involved in sports as a kid. "I never went out for sports in high school, in fact, I never took a gym class in high school," he says. "But times were different when I was a kid because I'll bet I played more hours of basketball and baseball than kids today who are on teams. There was always a pickup game that I could play."

When he was a graduate student at the University of Illinois in the mid-1970s, running was popular in Champagne-Urbana. He says that everyone was running back then and he started running like everyone else. His first competitive event, unlike most runners who often start out with a 5k, was a marathon. He got hooked on running and has been running ever since.

However, a few years after his knees took a pounding from several marathons and shorter races, he had a knee replacement. "I thought I would never run again," he remembers, "but my physical therapist after a couple of months of physical therapy said I could try out walking and maybe some short runs. At one point I promised myself I would not do long runs or walk over a half hour – but I break that rule regularly." Most of the triathlons and duathlons usually end up with a few miles of running.

Campbell, who prefers to run outdoors rather than on a treadmill, says that he doesn't like to travel around the country for events. So, he is looking forward to the Multisport Championship Festival at Lake Arvesta Farms next May.

"In a Multisport Championship they will have 12 different events over four days," he says. "It will be fun because every day there will be two or three events. Some of the athletes who will be there are crazy because they will do all of the events."

But not Jay Campbell.

"I've only signed up for 7 events."

GET YOUR NEWS ONLINE

Sign Up Today for our E-Papers.

IT'S EASY!

Just visit our website @ epaper.wilcoxnewspapers.com to start your $20.00 email Subscription.

Imperial Furniture
DOWAGIAC
Family Owned Since 1962
JOIN US FOR OUR
CHRISTMAS
OPEN HOUSE
NOVEMBER 13-15
THURSDAY, FRIDAY & SATURDAY
A THREE DAY EVENT
20% OFF*
CHRISTMAS & FALL ACCESSORIES
SAVE 10% STORE WIDE
ENJOY REFRESHMENTS WHILE YOU SHOP!
GIFT CERTIFICATE DRAWING!
* In stock items only. Not applicable to prior sales. See Stores for details
Thursday, November 13 9am – 5pm
Friday, November 14 9am – 5pm
Saturday, November 15 9am – 3pm
800-884-5020 • www.imperialfurnituredowagiac.com
57530 M-51 South, Dowagiac, Michigan 49047

Roman and Ava Plaszczak to serve as Paw Paw Holiday Parade Grand Marshals

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

PAW PAW - This year's all new Paw Paw "Christmas in the Village Lighted Holiday Parade" will honor a lifelong Paw Paw couple as grand marshals.

Roman and Ava Plaszczak will serve as grand marshals of the first ever nighttime parade, which will be held on Friday, Dec. 12, at 6 p.m.

In being named as a grand marshal, Ava said, "As a family-owned business (La Cantina, Inc.,) we are proud to celebrate 89 years of serving Paw Paw and the community around us. For nearly nine decades, La Cantina and my family have been deeply woven into the fabric of Paw Paw. We cherish the friendships we have made across generations and are grateful for the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the Paw Paw Fire Department, Knights of Columbus, Paw Paw Public Schools, Michigan Department of Human Services and support local events, organizations, causes and importantly our schools and athletic programs. Being part of this community is a privilege we hold dear. We are grateful to continue to be a part of this special place and thank the community for allowing us to continue a tradition that began with a dream and a recipe."

While involved in management at La Cantina Ristorante Italiano, the restaurant received several awards from the Paw Chamber of Commerce, special tributes from the Paw Paw Fire Department regarding the 9-11 recovery efforts and support for the fire department's 150th anniversary. The restaurant also received the State of Michigan Lifetime Achievement award and was featured on "America's Best Restaurants."

Plaszczak, who retired as a lawyer in 2022, shared similar sentiments about his lifelong involvement with the Paw Paw community. "I just like doing it. I receive enjoyment out of it. It makes you feel good."

He added, "I feel very lucky to have grown up and live here. I look at it this way, I owe this town. I'm giving back to a community that gave a lot to me."

In 2026, Plaszczak will mark his 25th year as president of the Paw Paw Village Council. The Vietnam veteran's involvement in organizations past and present include the Michigan Bar Association, American Bar Association, American Trial Lawyers Association, Kalamazoo County Bar Association, Kalamazoo County Trial Lawyers Association, Van Buren County Bar Association, Paw Paw Chamber of Commerce (past president), Paw Paw Area Rotary, (past president) Maple Lake Association, (past vice president), American Power Boat Racing Association, Michigan Offshore Powerboat Racing Association, Catholic Family Services Vietnamese Refugee Program (volunteer).

Plaszczak has received many awards and recognition over the years. They include Kalamazoo Civil Rights Litigation Award, 1986; the Honorable Raymond W. Fox Advocacy Achievement Award, 1990); Warren D. Sunstrand Award, 2010; American Power Boat Association Offshore A Central Division High Point Driver, 1993; cited in the book series, Modern Trials, second edition by Attorney Melvin M. Belli; U.S. Army – Bronze Star Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Plasczcak has also penned his first novel that he plans to self-publish. He is currently reviewing the manuscript of the mystery, murder and adventure that takes place in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and ends in Florida.

"I decided I would like to do it, just to say I've written a novel," said Plaszczak.

New state budget creates funding challenge for Van Buren ISD

LAWRENCE - The new state budget may look like a win for education, but for the Van Buren Intermediate School District (VBISD), it actually brings a major funding challenge. When all the changes are added up, VBISD is facing a net loss of more than $845,000 for the coming year.

That loss means new funding in areas like Special Education and Career & Technical Education (CTE) is being completely wiped out by cuts and cost shifts in other important programs. As a result, VBISD is concerned that this shortfall could affect the essential services and supports provided to local school districts and more than 15,000 students across Van Buren County.

Where the Funding Gap Comes From

● Retirement Cost Shift:

The largest hit comes from changes to how school employee retirement costs are funded. The state eliminated nearly $2 million that previously helped VBISD cover these mandatory expenses. While there was a small adjustment to lower the overall cap, the change still leaves VBISD paying about $650,000 more each year out of its regular operating budget, money that otherwise would go directly to classrooms and student support.

● Cuts to Early Childhood and Adult Education:

The Early Childhood Block Grant, which provided $342,000 for preschool programs that help children get ready for kindergarten, has been completely eliminated. Funding for Adult Education was also reduced by $68,000, making it harder for adults in our community to finish their high school education or build new career skills.

What It mean to the community?

VBISD appreciates the modest increases in some areas of the budget, but those gains don't come close to covering what's been lost. The district is now carefully reviewing its budget to limit the impact on students and staff as much as possible.

"Our top priority will always be doing what's best for kids," said Dave Manson, VBISD superintendent. "These changes make it harder to provide the same level of support our local schools and families count on. We're going to keep looking for ways to make sure our students continue to receive the services they deserve."

World War II vet left notebook of his time overseas

By Richard Teremi and Paul Garrod

As Veterans Day was marked this week on Tuesday, Nov. 11, a Paw Paw man shared photos and stories of his father and uncle, identical twins, who were born on July 4, 1918, and who both fought in World War II.

Jim Coady, of Paw Paw, said an article that appeared in the Grand Rapids Herald newspaper at the time of the birth of his father, Maurice, and Uncle Manus (Pat) Coady were "Fighters for Democracy." The twins were born in Coral, MI.

The Coady brothers grew up during the Great Depression. The two were both academically gifted and notable athletes. Prior to World War II, the two were given tryouts with the Detroit Tigers at Navin Field/Briggs Stadium/ Tiger Stadium. It was those tryouts that proved to be a costly mistake for the pair as they were made ineligible for Michigan State College athletics, following the discovery.

The two graduated from high school in 1936. Following graduation, Maurice worked in Grand Rapids at the West Dempster Commercial Photography Company. The site now is the home of the Gerald R. Ford Museum.

When World War II broke out, the two bothers left Michigan State and enlisted in the Army Air Corp. The Air Force as a stand-alone military branch did not become a reality until 1947.

The two brothers received their military training at Fort Custer, near Battle Creek. They went on to study in Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Valley Forge, PA., specializing in photography. They were then sent to Yale where out of the 50 entrees enrolled to be groomed as officers in photography, they were picked as the top two officers in their field.

As the two brothers continued to rise in military rank, the identical twin issue proved to be a deterrent. It was at that time that the two decided to accept separation going forward. Maurice achieved the rank of Photographic Laboratory Commander in Texas, while Manus switched to the 24th aerial mapping squadron.

Manus shipped out for the China, Burma, India Theater of the war as Manus headed in a huge 140 ship convoy to Europe. Before arriving in Italy where they were ultimately headed for deployment, Maurice and 26 other ground officers were moved onto the Fitzhugh Lee ship.

Pilots bumped them from the SS Paul Hamilton carrying 317 members of their squadron and 580 military personnel in total came under attack by German JU-88 torpedo planes.

The Hamilton was carrying large amounts of ammunition and explosives. The ship was torpedoed and blew up, killing everyone on board.

The 27 bumped from the 22 Paul Hamilton and placed on the Fitzhugh Lee were done so because the pilots wanted time to acquaint themselves with other non-pilot personnel on that ship, Maurice Coady told Jim, his son, that at first, he was upset because he was put on the other ship, until he found out it saved his life.

Maurice Coady and the 26 surviving unit members were shocked, scared, but happy to be alive. However, they still needed to make it safely to a port in Italy. Writing in his diary, Maurice said that they knew they were safe when they neared Italy and herd the roar of 300 B-24s flying overhead while returning from bombing runs.

When the 32nd aerial reconnaissance squadron arrived in Italy their unit was basically no longer in existence. After approximately two weeks, they were absorbed into the 12th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron. The 12th was the first phot recon unit in Europe at the start of the war. The 12th filmed Italy, Austria, Hungary, at the Balkan countries.

The P-38 Lightning twin prop plane proved to be a hero aircraft in WWII. It was used in both Theatres of the war, stripped of its guns and ammunition and used in photography missions, as well as other assignments including bomber escort, fighter plane and pathfinder unit work.

Clarence Kelly Johnson, a Michigan resident from the UP, is credited with designing the P-38, Johnson studied engineering at the University of Michigan and was later hired by Lockheed Aircraft. More than 10 million P-38 Lightnings were produced during WWII.

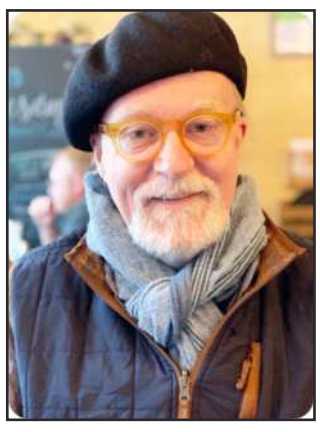
The Lightning was modified during the war for multiple reconnaissance capabilities and was given the names of F4 and F5. The modified versions were converted mainly for speed and distance missions in gathering needed and vital filming of enemy territory.

Most of the filming using the P-38 reconnaissance work was done at an altitude of 20,000 to 40,000 feet. The pilots flew their planes in enemy territory and without protective gear.

Maurice, who died Dec. 28, 2020, at the age of 102, left his family a notebook of photos and his own personal glimpses during WWII. His closing paragraph read: "In looking back I would have to say that I enjoyed my experience during World War II. I was no war hero or the like but did my job the best I could. During the week I worked 7 days, usually 14-16 hours per day. Our food overseas was not very good, with lots of spam, and dehydrated potatoes, but we always had good bread, peanut butter and apple butter. We had no beer for two years and then got six bottles a month. It took 30 days for a letter to reach home, and an equal number of days for a letter from home, so when you got a letter saying everything was fine at home, it really didn't mean much, for a lot can happen in 30 days. I write this just in case my grandchildren should ask where Grandpa Coady was during World War II? Well, now you know!"

insurance the right way.
the human way.
simple human sense
MCKENZIE INSURANCE
303 E Michigan, Paw Paw, MI 49079
Hrs: Mon-Fri, 9-5; Sat by Appt.
mckenziemi.com • 269.657.2548
Auto-Owners INSURANCE
LIFE • HOME • CAR • BUSINESS

Shakespeare Behind Bars coming to Scott Club



By James Windell

"Being an outsider, I have always been drawn to those who were most often marginalized for their differences," says Curt Tofteland. "I developed a positive reputation for having success working with students who were labeled cognitively or emotionally challenged."

His need to help the marginalized along with his success with kids with challenges led Tofteland to work with delinquents in juvenile detention facilities and later with incarcerated adults.

Founding Shakespeare Behind Bars in 1995, Tofteland's unique theater program for juveniles and adults who are locked up has grown into a nationwide program that now provides life-changing experiences for hundreds of people each year.

Curt Tofteland will be presenting at the Scott Club in South Haven on Tuesday, November 18, 2025. In his presentation, he will discuss the mission and philosophy of Shakespeare Behind Bars and he will show a video about his program.

In a recent exchange of emails, Curt Tofteland explained that the mission of Shakespeare Behind Bars is to offer theatrical encounters with personal and social issues to incarcerated, post-incarcerated, and at-risk communities, allowing them to develop life skills that will ensure their successful integration into society.

"Our vision is founded on the belief that all human beings are born inherently good," Tofteland wrote in his email. "Although some convicted criminals have committed heinous crimes against other human beings, the inherent goodness still lives deep within them and can be called forth by immersing participants in the safety of a Circle of Truth and the creative process."

Tofteland said he started out working in public and private school systems as a certified theatre arts practitioner with the Kentucky Arts Council. He gained a reputation for having success working with students who were labeled "cognitively or emotionally challenged." That led to him going into juvenile detention facilities in the early 1990s and a few years later beginning to work with adult prisoners.

Asked why he chose to do Shakespeare's plays with inmates, he said that Shakespeare is also an outsider. "Shakespeare is the first psychologist," he went on to say. "He was interested in the internal world of human beings, and he wrote about decent people doing indecent acts and indecent people doing decent acts. He explored the connection between thinking and behavior."

What he says that he enjoys the most about the work is to be a part of the miraculous transformation that takes place over time with the prisoners engaged in Shakespeare Behind Bars. "We work to change the human being," he says, "and when you change thinking, you change behavior. One proof is in our recidivism rate. The recidivism rate for those who are in Shakespeare Behind Bars is less than 6%, but the national average is more than 67%."

And what do incarcerated individuals get out of performing Shakespeare's plays? "I will say that the Shakespeare Behind Bars participants most often talk about the power of belonging to a positive family unit that believes in the innate goodness that lives within them and in their power to change," Tofteland said.

Curt Tofteland's presentation takes place at the Scott Club, 652 Phoenix Street, South Haven on Tuesday, November 18 at 1:00 pm. The program is free and open to all. For more information, visit the Scott Club website at Scottclub.org.

41st annual Paw Paw Community Thanksgiving Dinner to be held on Thanksgiving Day

PAW PAW – The 41st annual Paw Paw Community Thanksgiving Dinner is expected to be the largest yet, according to organizers who said economic uncertainty and the effects of the government shutdown will likely drive even more in the community to seek out free meals this Thanksgiving, Thursday, Nov. 27, at Freshwater Community Church, here.

This year, carry out meals are being added due to expected increased demand and lower in-person dining numbers last year.

Between 1,000 and 1,200 meals are expected to be served.

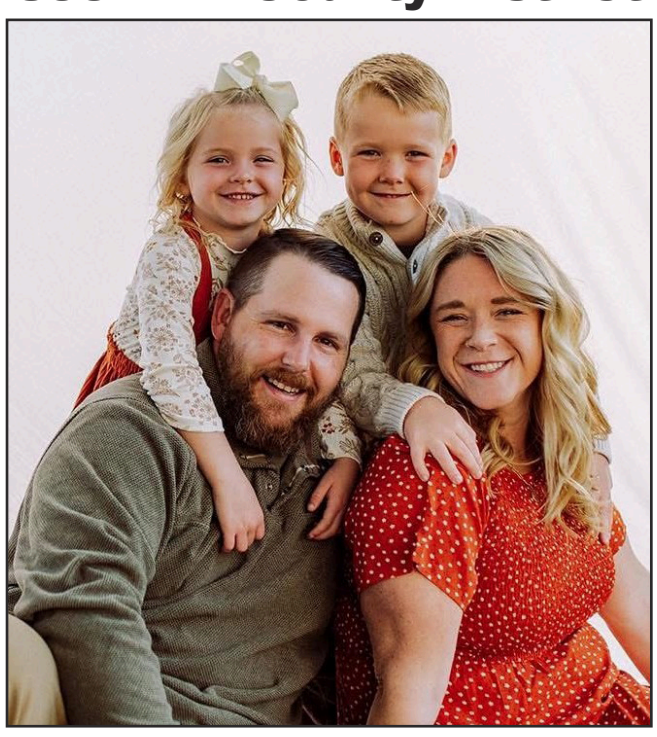
Organizers are once again asking the community to donate certain food items and frozen turkeys and fill about 80 volunteer positions.

Complete information and signups can be found at: www.pawpawturkey.org

A direct link to volunteer signups: 2025 P.P.C.T.D. Volunteer Signup

For more information, contact Coordinator Jason Bull at (269) 903-5773.

VB County Assistant Prosecutor to seek VB County District Court Judge



GOBLES - Van Buren County Assistant Prosecutor Rachel Doyle Keeley announced on Monday, Nov. 10, her candidacy for Van Buren County District Court Judge, bringing more than a decade of courtroom experience, deep local roots, and a career dedicated to protecting children and standing with victims.

Rachel's family has called Van Buren County home for over a century, beginning when her great-grandparents helped establish the Hilltop at Shamrock Shores in Gobles. A graduate of Gobles Public Schools, Rachel earned her undergraduate degree from DePaul University and her law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

After interning in the Van Buren County Prosecutor's Office, Rachel practiced law in South Haven before joining the Allegan County Prosecutor's Office, where she served from 2015 to 2021. In 2021, she returned home to continue her service as a Van Buren County Assistant Prosecutor.

For the past decade, Rachel has prosecuted some of the most serious and sensitive cases in Southwest Michigan, including child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence. She has been a Safe Harbor team member since 2015, advocating for victims across both Allegan and Van Buren counties. She also serves in Family Reunification Court, a program that helps families heal and rebuild after neglect and abuse cases.

Her work has earned the respect and support of local law enforcement and the bench. Rachel is endorsed by Judge Michael McKay, Judge Susan Metzger, Prosecuting Attorney Susan Zuiderveen, and Sheriff Daniel Abbott.

"For more than a decade, I've stood beside victims and sought justice in our courtrooms," said Keeley. "As your next District Court Judge, I'll bring that same resolve to the bench - firm when accountability is required, fair in every judgment, and founded on the belief that justice must always protect the innocent."

FOUNE
WELL DRILLING INC.
Since 1970
RESIDENTIAL - COMMERCIAL - IRRIGATION
WELL DRILLING & REPAIR
4" - 8" Wells
Specializing in 5" PVC Wells
Member of Michigan and National Ground Water Association
GROUND WATER PROFESSIONALS
628-2700
33215 M-43 • Paw Paw
STATE LICENSE #80-2159
0504-15FL

You're Invited!
ACCF 60th CELEBRATION
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
Revealing Allegan County's BEST KEPT SECRET!
November 6th 2025
The Griswold
401 Hubbard St, Allegan, MI 49010
$60 per person
MUSEUM
ACCF Allegan County Community Foundation
Impacting Community. For Good. For Ever.
RSVP By October 23rd

BIG BEAR AUCTIONS
PUBLIC AUCTION
Thursday November 20th @ 10:00 A.M.
Located: 21515 Crane St, Dowagiac, MI
• 1951 Chevy Step-side Pickup • 1951 Chevy Suburban & Panel Trucks • 1958 CJ5 Jeep • 1983 Ford 1 Ton 4X4 Pickup • 1960 Vintage Camper, Kubota B2410 Compact Tractor • 5 wheel JD Gator • 2 EZ-Go Golf Carts • 4 Hay Ride Wagons • Vintage Gas Pump • Many Vintage & Porcelain Signs • Railroad Switches • Air Compressor • Beer Signs • Hobart Welder • Torch Set • Patio Set • Tractor Seat Stools • Toolbox • Hand Tools & Mechanics Tools • Chop Saw • Drill Press • Chain Saws • Pole Saw • All Terrain Track HandiCap Chair • 3-Wheel Handicap Scooter • Antique Farm Implements • Fertilizer Spreader • Porch Gliders • Large Bird Cage • Alum Ext Ladder • Antique Furniture • RR Equip Items • Vintage License Plates • Owner: Sam Butler Sr.
BigBearAuctionCompany.Com
Lead Auctioneer: Larry Fisher 574-298-8909
Jerry & Aimee Glassman • 269-501-9732

YOU'LL ENJOY incredibly fast speeds
OUR INTERNET will blow you away
www.bloomingdalecom.com
(269) 521-7300
BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNICATIONS

ALWAYS FREE TOWING WITH ANY MAJOR OVERHAUL!
$129.95 TRANSMISSION TUNE-UP
Includes: Filter, Fluid, Check Codes & Adjust Bands if needed.
ATRA Honoring All After-Market Warranties!
SNK Transmission & Auto Repair
keeping you on the road.
22203 M-40
GOBLES, MI
(Across from Wahmhoff Farms)
269-628-0186

CENTSIBLE
HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING
$49
FURNACE MAINTENANCE
*INCLUDES FURNACE MAINTENANCE & SAFETY INSPECTION.
AFTER $49 EFFICIENCY UNITED REBATE FOR MI GAS UTILITIES CUSTOMERS, OFFER ENDS DECEMBER 31.
(269)468-6001 CENTSIBLEMICHIGAN.COM

VIEWPOINT

The True Spirit of Christmas Lives in Helping Others

MIKE'S MUSINGS

MIKE WILCOX ■ PUBLISHER ■

As the Christmas season approaches, the lights, music, and festive cheer remind us of joy, family, and tradition. But amid the celebration, it's also a time to remember what this season truly represents — compassion, generosity, and community. For many families, Christmas isn't about abundance or gifts under the tree; it's about simply getting through another winter month. That's why it's so important that those who are able reach out to help those who are not — and why the Wilcox Newspapers Christmas Wish Fund remains a vital part of our community's holiday spirit.

The holidays can be especially hard for struggling families. Rising costs of food, utilities, and housing have left many parents wondering how they'll afford even the basics, let alone Christmas gifts for their children. For seniors living alone or on fixed incomes, loneliness can weigh as heavily as financial strain. This is where we — as neighbors, friends, and caring citizens — can make a difference.

Each year, the Christmas Wish Fund, supported by donations from readers and local businesses, helps bring a bit of hope to those who need it most. Whether it's providing a warm coat for a child, groceries for a family, or a small gift for someone who thought they'd been forgotten, every dollar donated touches a real life right here in our communities. It's proof that even small acts of kindness ripple outward, turning despair into gratitude and hardship into hope.

Giving isn't just about money — it's about empathy. It's about seeing beyond our own front doors and realizing that our neighbors' struggles may not always be visible. The holidays are an ideal time to pause and reflect on our blessings, and to share them. When we give through efforts like the Christmas Wish Fund, we're not only lifting others up — we're strengthening the bonds that make our communities special.

We have been spearheading this fund to help the less fortunate in our communities for over ten years. We have contributed countless thousands of dollars to hundreds of families. The funding has come from the generous local businesses in our communities, as well as wonderful individuals who have it in their heart to help others.

In a world that often feels divided, generosity is a unifying force. It reminds us that what truly matters isn't what we receive, but what we give. So this Christmas, as you wrap gifts and share meals, consider helping those who could use a little extra light in their lives. A contribution to the Wilcox Newspapers Christmas Wish Fund is more than a donation — it's a message of hope, kindness, and community spirit.

I can't thank enough those that have contributed in the past. We have received donations from $10 to $2000 and every penny has went to help a less fortunate family in the area in which the donation came from.

To donate or request assistance through the Wilcox Newspapers Christmas Wish Fund, please email us at wilcoxnewspapers@gmail.com. Assistance is requested by writing a letter telling us why you deserve to be funded. Individuals can donate by sending a check to Wilcox Newspapers, PO Box 189, Allegan Mi. 49010.

Sheriff's Report- Arrest warrants being sought on suspects involved in theft of A/C coils

The suspect vehicle from the larceny of approximately 30 air conditioning coils from a business in Antwerp Township from last week's news updates was located.

"Interviews were conducted, and arrest warrants will be coming on the suspects.

The stolen property was scrapped prior to locating the vehicle and suspects," said Van Buren County Sheriff Daniel Abbott.

Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Uniform Response handled a domestic assault in Waverly Township.

After the investigation was completed, the male half was lodged for the incident.

Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Detectives sought charges on a Grand Junction man stemming from an investigation earlier this year. "While they were at his residence recovering a stolen trailer, they saw he had tampered with the power line and service meter, hence stealing electricity," said Sheriff Abbott. It was found that the total loss to the power company exceeded $5,700 from the electricity and damages. He was lodged and arraigned on felony charges.

The driver of the vehicle that crashed into an Amish buggy in Bloomingdale Township was arraigned this past week on her charges.

"The case will continue through the judicial process moving forward," said Sheriff Abbott.

"On behalf of our office, thank you to all our veterans for your service. We can live free in America because of our citizens serving in the military. Thank you, it's appreciated more than you know," said Sheriff Abbott.

"Our office worked in conjunction with several other law enforcement offices on a kidnapping call. Several of the other offices were from other states. The suspect was eventually found in another state and lodged for the incident. The two victims were found safe," said Sheriff Abbott.

"With the cold weather setting in, just a friendly reminder to make sure your smoke detectors are up to speed," said Sheriff Abbott.

"With firearm deer season opening Saturday and deer in full rut, be extra vigilant for deer on the roadway," said Sheriff Abbott.

For the month of October, deputies had 273 traffic stops, bringing the total for the year to 4,006. They handled 868 calls for service, bringing the total for the year to 8,553.

Uniform Response handled a larceny of a license plate tab in Hartford Township.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Aric Nesbitt grew up on a dairy farm, and that is about all one needs to know about him to explain his impressive character and his strong work ethic. Dairy farmers must attend to their cows all day and all year, and that kind of commitment is in Aric's blood. We have already seen that he has served us as well as a state senator and representative. He will make us in southwest Michigan proud when he next serves as our governor.

As a fiscal and social conservative he will continue to represent our values and turn around the current trends in Lansing of overspending our money and the ongoing attempts at progressive experimentation of our children. Most important for most of us, Aric supports life, and he has been a solid advocate of the right to life for all.

As his name and reputation become better known throughout the rest of the state, expect a tough Republican primary battle ahead, but spread the word and tell your friends that Aric Nesbitt is the best choice there is to be Michigan's 48th governor.

Lorrie and Jack Bley
Paw Paw

To the Editor:

I've lived in Paw Paw my whole life, and I plan to stay here for good. I've seen a lot of politicians come and go, but every once in a while, someone comes along who feels genuine. That's how I feel about Chris Moraitis.

Chris isn't some polished career politician. He grew up in a single-parent home and worked for everything he's got. He earned a law degree, married a wonderful young woman, and has been involved in countless events right here in Paw Paw. When I read that he had already raised over $100,000 since announcing his campaign in September, I thought, well, people must see what I see, someone real.

He talks about the things that matter to our community: grocery bills, gas prices, and property taxes that keep going up. He knows families are struggling, and seniors are worried about keeping our homes.

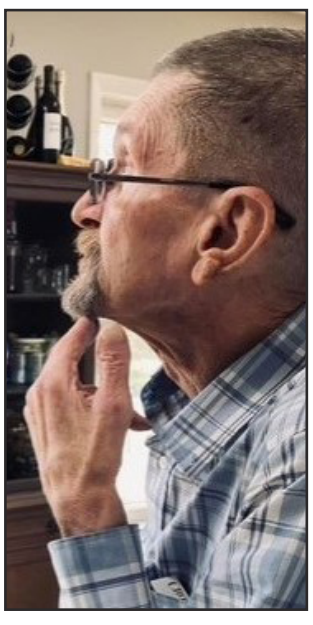
I like that he's earned the support of people we actually know - our sheriff, our prosecutor, and local Van Buren officials.

Chris Moraitis believes in hard work, community, and common sense. As we head into next year's election, I encourage everybody to read up on this incredible young man and support him as he fights to make our community an even better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Catey Bolton

OBITUARY

Charles Alan Cerny



Charles Alan Cerny, 66, of Lawton, passed away suddenly on Friday, Oct. 31, 2025, at his home in Lawton. He was born Dec. 4, 1958, in Kalamazoo, MI, the son of Edward Charles Cerny, Jr., and Patricia J. (Garrett) Cerny.

Charles was a dedicated employee of Welch's, Lawton, and retired from there after many years of service. He was a homebody and enjoyed the serenity of his home and property. He could often be found woodworking. Above all else, Charles adored his family, especially his two grandchildren. They lit up his life, and he always looked forward to spending time with them. His grandchildren loved it when he sneaked candy to them after mom said they'd had enough! Charles was a kind, loving and nurturing person and he will be missed tremendously.

He is survived by his daughter, Katie (James) Kiewiet; grandchildren, Mason and Isabelle Kiewiet; sister, Debra (late Rick) Brown and many nieces and nephews.

Charles was preceded in death by his parents; infant brother, Edward Cerny, III; and sister, Patricia Mayne.

Family and friends are invited to visit on Thursday, Nov. 20, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Adams Funeral Home, 502 W. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw. A time to share memories of Charles will begin at 6 p.m.

Memorial contributions may be directed to the family to establish a college fund for his grandchildren.

Driver's License Restoration | Drunk Driving & Criminal Defense
It's a Process... We Can Help! | "Friends... Don't Let Friends Plead Guilty!"
08-03-15FL
Law Office of
FREDERICK J. TAYLOR
269-388-6060 • 1-800-250-FRED

LAST CHANCE OPEN WATER FISHING

Alvin Bylsma with a December double

JACK PAYNE

Payne is a member of OWAA (outdoor writers association of America). He is an avid outdoorsperson who enjoys fishing, hunting, hiking and cooking. This column will hopefully enhance your outdoor experiences. "While I may have some knowledge, I am very fortunate that I do know many true experts that share their knowledge with me," said Payne. "Together, hopefully we all can learn and experience more fun in the great outdoors." Payne resides in southwest Michigan. His column will appear weekly in the Courier Leader/ Flashes.

Snow flurries spun around us, leaving a light dusting on the boat's carpet. We were glad to have our neck gaiters and warm clothes.

The fish were active, and after a few hours, we had a full limit of bluegill in the live well. From late November until the lakes freeze, this is the best time of year for bluegill and crappie fishing.

If you want to catch a trophy walleye or northern pike, now is the time. Muskegon Lake is one of the best spots in our area for landing a master angler walleye or pike.

While panfish are almost always a sure bet for a limit, pike and walleye can be tricky. Some days, pike fishing feels easy, but on others, we get humbled.

If you're after a trophy walleye, try fishing after sunset. This is by far the best time. Mark Martin made late-season trolling for walleye a must-try technique.

I like to cast after dark, focusing on water that's two to six feet deep. During the day, we target the steepest drop-offs. Flats in six to ten feet of water that quickly drop to forty feet or more are also very productive.

After dark, Rapala Husky Jerk baits work well. Casting crankbaits can be hit or miss. On Muskegon Lake, you might cast for over an hour without a bite, then catch several fish in the next half hour. Walleye move in small groups and ambush prey in shallow water.

Anglers either hold a rod in hand, waiting for the faintest of bites, or troll with planner boards. Anglers like Mark Martin loved trolling with a rod in hand and believed that most anglers missed the very subtle change of a walleye. If your crankbait changes at all, set the hook.

I like casting different jigging spoons, especially during the day. The Hopkins Spoon and Jigging Rap are two of my favorites. If you're interested, search for articles by Daryl Christnsen—he's won many tournaments with a Hopkins Spoon.

Jigging Raps and Hopkins spoons are hard to put down. We catch walleye, bass, and pike with them. I enjoy holding the rod and being able to see what I'm casting toward.

This is also a great time to chase pike. Anglers have their choice between trolling or casting Husky Jerks, Daredevle spoons, or Mepps bucktail spinners. Think big baits, such as the larger size Husky Jerks, one-ounce spoons, and either the size five Mepps or the Musky size models.

I prefer casting, but on my last trip, trolling would have worked better. The lesson is to be ready for both. Watch for the edges of green weeds and steep drop-offs.

If you're after bluegill, try Perch pounders, glow teardrops, ice flies, spikes, or my favorite—wax worms. As the water gets colder, bigger bluegill move into the bayous of our local rivers.

On our inland lakes, it's common to find schools of bluegill in twenty-five to thirty feet of water. Sometimes they suspend halfway down, and other days they stay within a foot or two of the bottom.

Crappie anglers, now it's your turn. We often catch bluegill and crappie at the same time. Try marabou or hair jigs with a minnow for crappie, or use a tube jig tipped with a minnow. This is a great time to use a lure and bait combo. We usually find them in the deeper parts of the lake, twenty-five to forty feet down and close to the bottom.

Piers and rivers are producing walleye, smallmouth bass, steelhead, catfish, and more. It's a great time for shore anglers. If you've already filled your deer tags, try some late-season fishing. And don't forget to stop by Bob's Gun and Tackle Shop.

Auto Accidents • Serious Injuries
Wrongful Death
Helping People in Michigan For Over 35 Years
COOPER LAW
www.cooperlawplc.com
VA DISABLILITY LAW CENTER
www.veteransdisabilitylawcenter.com
ARMED FORCES FOUNDATION
www.usarmedforcesfoundation.org
501(c)3 nonprofit charity
www.scrafoundation.org
501(c)3 nonprofit charity
269-436-8316
134 S, PHELPS STREET #64 • DECATUR, MI 49045
LOCATED IN THE HISTORIC MINT EXCHANGE BUILDING DOWNTOWN DECATUR

THE COURIER LEADER
PAW PAW FLASHES
SOUTH HAVEN BEACON
PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY WILCOX NEWSPAPERS, LLC
PO Box 189, Allegan, MI 49010
(269) 657-3072 • wilcoxnewspapers.com
Publisher - Mike Wilcox
Graphics- Liz LaValle
Reporter - Paul Garrod & James Windell
IT - Jordan Wilcox
PERIODICAL RATE POSTAGE PAID AT PAW PAW, MI 49079-0129
Postmaster-Send address changes to: PO Box 189, Allegan, MI 49010

Mattawan volleyball takes district title

The district champion Mattawan volleyball team.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

MATTAWAN — Mattawan's volleyball team secured a district title on Nov. 6 with a 25-19, 25-20, 25-22 sweep over St. Joseph.

Here are stats from the match.

Ace leader: Kylie Weiss (4).

Kill leaders: Brooklyn Brassard (12); Larkin Baima (8).

Dig leader: Macey Brown (16).

Assists leader: Brooke Steeves (27).

Block leader: Charlotte Douglass (3); Larkin Baima (3); Annemarie Pelak (3).

"What is especially special about this match is that in set 3 we were down 11-19," coach Megan McCorry said. "Senior defensive specialist Kylie Weiss had an incredible serving run to get us tied up and the momentum to seal the deal."

Mattawan was set to play Byron Center on Nov. 11 at Portage Northern High School in a regional semifinal match. The finals will be on Nov. 13.

"Truly, this group of seniors, may not be my tallest class but they have heart," McCorry said. "It was great to see kids step up and lead in stat areas that they typically don't. That's the definition of team."

South Haven senior enjoys banner season

Aron Moreno admires the state runner-up soccer trophy his team received.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

SOUTH — Aron Moreno is among the South Haven seniors who was able to enjoy being on a state runner-up soccer team in Division 3.

"The team performed amazing throughout the entire season. We grew from our mistakes and make great achievements," Moreno said. "I believe I performed good throughout my senior season. Pushing myself and my teammates again and again. Although there are instances in which I regret, moving forward is all that matters.

"I feel as I have grown as a player and teammate overall, by polishing my passing techniques and defense and also improving my communication skills on the field."

Moreno was team center-defensive Midfielder.

"I was playing both sides of the field, controlling the area in front of our defenders and helping stop attacks," Moreno said. "It's an important role as it can impact every play on the field. During the playoffs, I would play every minute of the game with no substitutes.

"My role generally stayed the same, but was altered a little to help my defenders more and control that area, although I stayed in the same position. To me my strengths as a player and performer were most definitely my persistence on defense, and the agility to connect passes with players up the field, paving the way for a counter-attack.

Moreno added:

"During the season I focused on improving my tempo, being able to slow the game down and make the correct decisions as I saw them. My most memorable moments would be scoring in the regional finals while trailing 0-1 to Grand Rapids Catholic Central.

"We gave up a goal first and our momentum was down, not being fully confident in ourselves. Yet on a corner-kick I had my eyes set on the ball as it bounced just outside the box. I hit the ball mid-air as a volley, and was able to equalize the game, reviving our drive and focus."

Team highlights included winning the Bangor Invitational, and being 2025 district champions, regional champions, and being the Division 3 state runners ups.

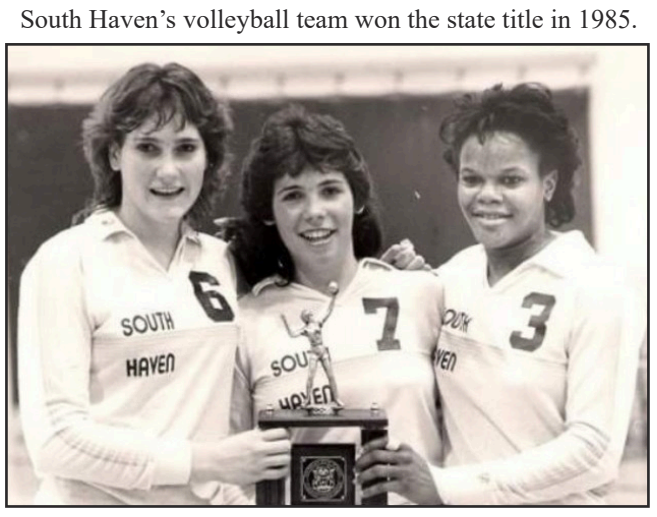
"I feel as though I exceeded my own expectations. The team has most definitely exceeded our expectations and did amazing this season. "

His only sport is soccer.

"Soccer will always be my passion in sports, as it is a beautiful game and Shared all across the world," Moreno said. "With the season ending, my sports career ends with it. As much as I love soccer, it is not in my future. It was an amazing sport to play for the past 10 years."

South Haven volleyball celebrates 50 years

South Haven's volleyball team won the state title in 1985.



The seniors on the South Haven 1985 volleyball team were (all maiden names) Lisa Stone, Camille Babcock and Tracey Ross (McIntosh).

By John Raffel
Correspondent

SOUTH HAVEN — Tracey (Ross) McIntosh and other former South Haven volleyball players this seasons recognized the 50th anniversary of the program.

It was also the 40th anniversary of a very special team. McIntosh played South Haven volleyball from her freshmen through senior years. As a sophomore she moved up to varsity and was on the 1985 state championship team.

She was a middle blocker-outside hitter for the team despite standing only 5 feet, 4 inches.

The state title season was special.

"In the beginning it was unexpected because we were a young team. There were only three seniors," McIntosh recalled. "It was unexpected. But once we got the ball rolling, no pun intended, we were thinking we could do it and won the state championship.

"I believe I was a good hitter. I believe my vertical leap was a good thing and I always did a lot of tips. I would go up like I was going to hit and I would tip the ball over. That was a little trick I had."

McIntosh did not play sports after high school, She played basketball also at South Haven. Volleyball was her main sport.

After high school she coached South Haven Middle School volleyball for two years. She's currently working at Covert schools.

"I'm trying to get a young team together, like lower elementary," McIntosh said.

McIntosh still lives in South Haven and teaches at Covert.

Volleyball at South Haven, "coach (Dene) Harden was and is amazing," McIntosh said. "He was a great leader a great supporter and still is now today. I still call him coach Hadden. I'm grateful he was a part of my volleyball career."

Gobles volleyball team made improvement

The 2025 Gobles volleyball team recently ended its season.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

GOBLES — Renee Rambadt has been coaching for 25 seasons and liked the progress her Gobles volleyball team made this year.

The final record was 8-25-2.

"Our season was filled with ups and downs, but through it all, the girls showed tremendous growth," Rambadt said. "They learned to overcome mistakes with resilience and to keep pushing forward, no matter the challenge. Their passing became more consistent, and they knew how to make smart, confident plays while adjusting to the ball. Most importantly, they grew not only as volleyball players but also as teammates who supported each other every step of the way.

"We met many of our expectations this season. One of our main goals was to win districts, and while we made it to the second round, the journey there showed just how much we grew as a team. Along the way, we learned the importance of working together and continued to build on the 4 C's — communication, celebration, coverage, and consistency. These values not only strengthened our teamwork on the court but also shaped our character and resilience as a program."

One of the season highlights was during Gobles' crossover match against Watervliet.

"The team was down by seven points but refused to give up — they fought their way back with determination and teamwork, ultimately winning the game 26–24. It was an incredible moment that showed their heart, perseverance, and belief in one another," Wambadt said.

Wambadt made the following comments about top players:

"Killeen was a tremendous asset to our team as a three-year varsity athlete and a two-year captain. Her leadership, dedication, and passion for the game made a lasting impact on our program. She earned First Team All-Conference honors for two consecutive years and also received an Individual Academic Award for her excellence in the classroom. Her commitment both on and off the court truly sets an example for others to follow.

"Elianna Wood is a three-year varsity athlete and a two-year captain who earned an Individual Academic Award and received Honorable Mention for conference honors. Her dedication, both on the court and in the classroom, reflects her commitment to excellence and her positive impact on the team.

"Senior Adriana Dickerson, a team captain, earned an Individual Academic Award and brought a calm, supportive presence to the team. Her steady leadership and gentle guidance helped balance the team's energy and positively impacted everyone around her.

"Senior Kim Newland, one of this year's four team captains, served as an organizer and leader, ensuring everyone was prepared and supported. Her guidance and encouragement helped the team stay focused, connected, and ready to give their best on the court."

What does next year look like?

"We are losing four incredible seniors who have made a lasting impact on our volleyball program, and we are so grateful for their dedication, leadership, and hard work," Rambadt said. "At the same time, we are excited to see what our returning juniors, sophomores, and freshmen will bring next season as they continue to grow and carry the program forward."

Bloomingdale volleyball completes season

By John Raffel
Correspondent

BLOOMINGDALE — Taylor Blazys enjoyed a strong volleyball season for Bloomingdale High School.

"As a whole for our season I think our team played exceptionally well," Blazys said "We had our highs and lows but we had an enjoyable season. As the season progressed I preformed better and better as we played. I think I did pretty well this season for being a freshman at the varsity level. I also got my first ever in game block and got a couple more through out the season.

"This season I improved so much from last year. I went from not knowing how to hit, not knowing how to block, and serving out almost every time, to going to tryouts and making varsity, and getting blocks all season."

Blazys on the team is a right side hitter and set a little.

"Last year I was in middle school and we didn't have positions but I set a little," Blazys said. "I learned mostly everything this summer and through out the season. I got consistent blocks and touch's all season that helped our team and I also got many digs of the block that kept our team not out of system.

"I worked on setting and hitting all season. I focused on really getting my technique down so I could strive for the best of my abilities. My most memorable moment of the season was getting a block on one of the Michigan Lutheran outside hitters. I was getting constant touch's the whole first set and I finally got the block. I was so proud and so was my team and my coaches."

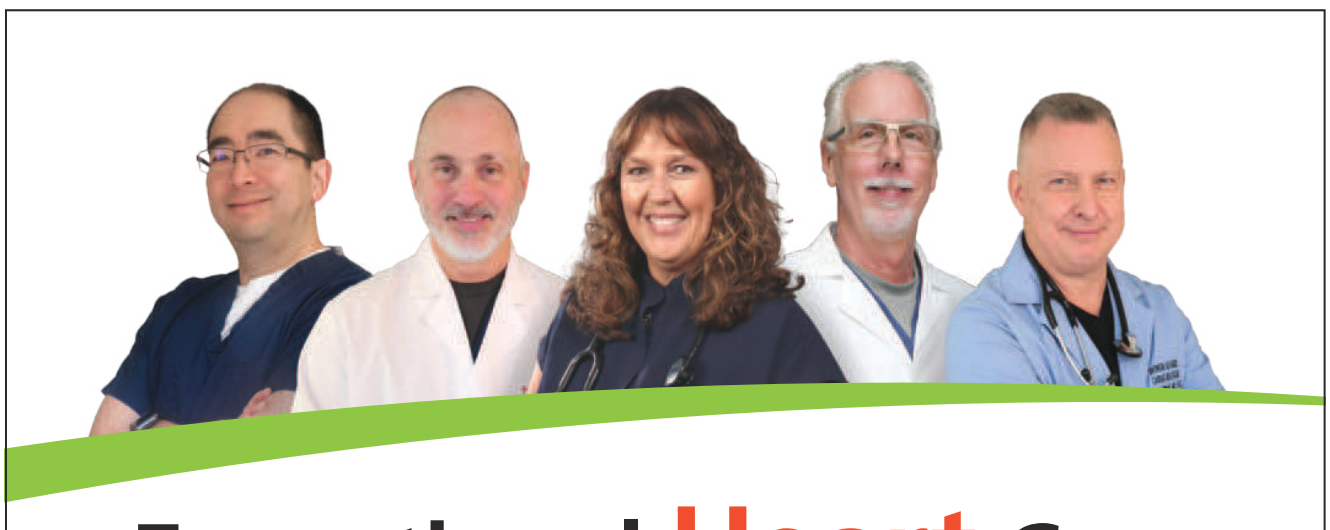
Blazys added: "Some team highlights I have are when our outside hitters number four gets a kill we all get super excited and yell because she yells and it just makes me happy. Also when we're were down and someone would get an ace we would all be so hype.

"I really exceeded my expectations this year with making varsity and getting my first in game block. We didn't always win but we always played our best and had fun."

She also plays softball and basketball.

"Softball is my favorite sport because I have played it my whole life and I do travel softball," Blazys said. "When the season ends I will start basketball."

When protecting your Auto, Home and Life, the
EXPERIENCE MATTERS.
Awarded the 2025 Farm Bureau Insurance Leadership in Action Award.
Call Derek Lietzau today!
(269) 655-1814
408 W. Michigan Ave. Paw Paw
DerekInsGroup.com
Proud recipient of The Farm Bureau Office of Excellence Award - where award-winning service meets real peace of mind.
FARM BUREAU INSURANCE® A Company


Exceptional Heart Care
50 TOP CARDIOVASCULAR HOSPITALS 2025
When it comes to your heart, you want the best. That's why more people choose Bronson for heart care than any other health system in southwest Michigan. Our cardiology team in Van Buren County is dedicated to quality and works closely with you and your primary care provider to develop a personalized plan of care. Whether your heart needs medical management, a procedure or surgery, when you choose one of us, you get the skill, compassion and fierce determination of a top team of experts!
Learn more at bronsonhealth.com/heart.
BRONSON

• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

State of Michigan Probate Court
Van Buren County
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S ESTATE
CASE NO 25-1180-DE
212 E. Paw Paw Street, #220,
Paw Paw, MI 49079
(269) 657-8225
Estate of SHARON C. RAHN, Deceased Date of Birth:April 3,1944
TO ALL CREDITORS: **
NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, **SHARON C. RAHN, died October 2,2025 (10/2/2025).**
Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to **AMY M. BOSHEARS**, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 E. Paw Paw Street, **#220, Paw Paw, MI 49079** and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.
November 10, 2025
Attorney:
Garrett T. McNally #P55569
120 West Main, P.O. Box 187
Marcellus, MI 49067
269-646-5511
Personal representative
Amy M. Boshears
1351 Madison Avenue
Dyer, IN 46311

State of Michigan Probate Court
Van Buren County
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S ESTATE
CASE NO 2025-1152-DE
212 E. Paw Paw Street, #220,
Paw Paw, MI 49079
(269) 657-8225
Estate of CARRI JEAN FULLER, Deceased Date of Birth: August 3,1964
TO ALL CREDITORS: **
NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, **Carri Jean Fuller, died January 4,2025 (1/4/2025).**
Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to **STEVEN M. JONES**, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 E. Paw Paw Street, **#220, Paw Paw, MI 49079** and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.
November 4, 2025
Attorney:

Personal representative
Steven M. Jones
335 Allen Court
Waterffiel MI 49098
269-277-9952

State of Michigan Probate Court
Van Buren County
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S ESTATE
CASE NO 2025-1152-DE
212 E. Paw Paw Street, #220,
Paw Paw, MI 49079
(269) 657-8225
Estate of ELLIOTT S. CURTIS, Deceased Date of Birth:*
TO ALL CREDITORS: **
NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, **ELLIOTT S. CURTIS, died October 1, 2025(10/1/2025).**
Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to **CONNIE NEDEAU**, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 E. Paw Paw Street, **#220, Paw Paw, MI 49079** and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.
November 4, 2025
Attorney:
Schuitmaker Moraitis Law Office, P.C.
Christopher N. Moraitis P87052
181 West Michigan Ave., Ste. 1, P.O.Box 520
Paw Paw, MI 49079
269-657-3177
Personal representative
CONNIE NEDEAU
388 Smith Mill
Fayetteville, TN 37334
(931) 993-2340

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Kay O`Neil; Atty: Schneiderman & Sherman, P.C. - Schneiderman & Sherman, PC; 1st Pub: 10/23/2025; Atty File #: 25-002950-1; Insurer: (unknown)
SHORT FORECLOSURE NOTICE - VAN BUREN COUNTY Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 49c of the State Housing Development Authority Act of 1966, 1966 PA 346, MCL 125.1449c, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on November 20, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Kay O`Neil and Cameron Richardson, wife and husband Original Mortgagee: Neighborhood Loans, Inc. Date of mortgage: May 17, 2024 Recorded on May 28, 2024, Liber 1766, on Page 258, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Michigan State Housing Development Authority Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: One Hundred Ninety Thousand Nine Hundred Forty-Two and 05/100 Dollars ($190,942.05) Mortgaged premises: Situated in Van Buren County, and described as: Lot 3, Block 1, Union Addition to Lawton, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 10 of plats, Page 540, Van Buren County Records. Commonly known as 415 S Main St, Lawton, MI 49065 The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 125.1449v, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 125.1449v(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Michigan State Housing Development Authority Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 1575520
(10-23)(11-13)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Richard A Eisner; Atty: Schneiderman & Sherman, P.C. - Schneiderman & Sherman, PC; 1st Pub: 10/23/2025; Atty File #: 25-002985-1; Insurer: (unknown)
SHORT FORECLOSURE NOTICE - VAN BUREN COUNTY Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on November 20, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Richard A. Eisner and Sharon K. Eisner, husband and wife Original Mortgagee: Household Bank, FSB Date of mortgage: September 7, 2001 Recorded on September 21, 2001, Liber 1340, on Page 71, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): New Residential Mortgage Loan Trust 2014-3 Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: Forty-Six Thousand Five Hundred Thirty-Five and 65/100 Dollars ($46,535.65) Mortgaged premises: Situated in Van Buren County, and described as: Lot 1 of Bangor Heights, according to the recorded plat thereof, being a subdivision of part of Lot 3 and Lot 16, Supervisor`s Plat of Zuhl Addition to Bangor, as recorded in Liber 4 of Plats on Page 40, and adjacent land in the north half of section 7, town 2 south, range 15 west, according to the Government Survey thereof. Commonly known as 29449 Eastwood Ln, Bangor, MI 49013 The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the above referenced property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. New Residential Mortgage Loan Trust 2014-3 Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 1575530
(10-23)(11-13)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Wesley B Ready Jr; Atty: Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C. - Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C.; 1st Pub: 10/30/2025; Atty File #: 24MI00680-2; Insurer: (unknown)
FORECLOSURE NOTICE
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 01:00 PM, December 4, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default has been made in the conditions of a certain mortgage made by Wesley B Ready Jr. and Teresa Taylor-Ready, Husband and Wife to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as Mortgagee, as Nominee for Primelending, A Plainscapital Company , its successors, and assigns, Mortgagee, dated September 30, 2021, and recorded on October 12, 2021, in Liber 1727, Page 298, Van Buren County Records, said mortgage was assigned to Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC by an Assignment of Mortgage dated April 23, 2025 and recorded April 23, 2025 in Liber 1778, Page 114, on which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of Two Hundred Two Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety-Two and 07/100 ($202,892.07) including interest at the rate of 3.62500% per annum. Said premises are situated in the Township of Bloomingdale, Van Buren County, Michigan, and are described as: Beginning at the center of Section 21, Town 1 South, Range 14 West; Thence North 89 degrees 21 minutes 05 seconds West on the East and West 1/4 line 305.00 feet; Thence North parallel with the North and South 1/4 line, 385 feet; Thence South 89 degrees 21 minutes 05 seconds East parallel with the East and West 1/4 line 305.00 feet to the North and South 1/4 line, Thence South on same, 385.00 feet to the place of beginning. Commonly known as: 13756 41ST ST, BLOOMINGDALE, MI 49026 If the property is eventually sold at foreclosure sale, the redemption period will be 6.00 months from the date of sale unless the property is abandoned or used for agricultural purposes. If the property is determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241 and/or 600.3241a, the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of sale, or 15 days after statutory notice, whichever is later. If the property is presumed to be used for agricultural purposes prior to the date of the foreclosure sale pursuant to MCL 600.3240, the redemption period is 1 year. Pursuant to MCL 600.3278, if the property is sold at a foreclosure sale, the borrower(s) will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. TO ALL PURCHASERS: The foreclosing mortgagee can rescind the sale. In that event, your damages are, if any, limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. Dated: October 30, 2025 Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C. Attorneys for Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC 43252 Woodward Avenue, Suite 180, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302, (248) 335-9200 Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Case No. 24MI00680-2
(10-30)(11-20)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Nancy M. Dubois; Atty: Orlans; 1st Pub: 11/6/2025; Atty File #: 25-012980; Insurer: GNMA
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM on DECEMBER 4, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Nancy M. DuBois, a married woman, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Amerifirst Financial Corporation, Mortgagee, dated August 6, 2018 and recorded August 10, 2018 in Liber 1672, Page 378 and Loan Modification Agreement recorded on May 13, 2020, in Liber 1700, Page 95, Van Buren County Records, Michigan. Said mortgage is now held by Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of One Hundred Forty-Three Thousand Five Hundred Twenty-Six and 25/100 Dollars ($143,526.25). Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Van Buren County, Michigan at 1:00 PM on DECEMBER 4, 2025.
Said premises are located in the Village of Paw Paw, Van Buren County Michigan, and are described as:
Lots 4 and 5, Block 3 of Marcelletti's Addition to the Village of Paw Paw, according to the recorded Plat thereof, as recorded in Liber 4 of Plats, Page 9, and amended by Order of the Circuit Court as recorded in Liber 503, Page 121, Van Buren County Records.
501 Marcelletti Ave, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period.
Dated: November 6, 2025
File No. 25-012980
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400
(11-06)(11-27)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Mariah Cutlip; Atty: Team X; 1st Pub: 11/6/2025; Atty File #: 526641F01; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on December 11, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Mariah A. Cutlip and Wyman P. Cutlip, wife and husband
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Freedom Mortgage Corporation
Date of Mortgage: November 22, 2019
Date of Mortgage Recording: December 2, 2019
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $108,507.76
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Decatur, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as:
The West 181.5 feet of the East 544.5 feet of South 231 feet of the Southwest 1/4 of the Northeast 1/4 of Section 17. Town 4 South, Range 14 West, Decatur Township Van Buren County, Michigan.
Common street address (if any): 42658 82nd Ave, Decatur, MI 49045-9175
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: November 6, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1576398
(11-06)(11-27)

Van Buren; Mtgr: Thomas E Demarest; Atty: Shaheen - Shaheen Jacobs & Ross PC; 1st Pub: 11/13/2025; Atty File #: (N/A); Insurer: (unknown)
FORECLOSURE NOTICE (Van Buren County) NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE BY ADVERTISEMENT. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County (at the front steps of the Courthouse in Paw Paw, Michigan), starting promptly at 1:00 o'clock P.M. on Thursday, December 18, 2025. Default has been made in the terms and conditions of the mortgage made by Thomas E. Demarest and Crystalle Demarest, husband and wife, as original mortgagors, to The Huntington National Bank, a national banking association, as original mortgagee, dated August 28, 2018, and recorded on September 18, 2018, at the Van Buren County, Michigan Register of Deeds, in Liber 1673, commencing on Page 936. The amount claimed to be due on this mortgage, on the date of this notice, was $380,188.36. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. The description of the mortgaged premises is all that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Township of Paw Paw, in the County of Van Buren and State of Michigan further described as follows: Part of the Northeast fractional 1/4 of fractional section 2, Town 3 South, Range 14 West, described as commencing at the North 1/4 post of said Section 2; thence East along the North line of said Section, 301.01 feet to the point of beginning of the land herein described; thence continuing East along said North line 614.03 feet to the Northwest corner of the plat of Green Meadow Highlands, according to the plat thereof as recorded in Liber 7 of Plats, Page 83 of Van Buren County Records; thence South 00 degrees 36 minutes 17 seconds West, along the East line of said plat and its extension Southerly thereof, 957.59 feet; thence North 89 degrees 28 minutes 10 seconds West, parallel with the South line of the North fractional 1/2 of said Northeast fractional 1/4, 34.00 feet; thence South 00 degrees 36 minutes 17 seconds West, 500.00 feet to said South line; thence North 89 degrees 28 minutes 10 seconds West, along said South line, 80.00 feet; thence North 00 degrees 36 minutes 17 seconds East 500.00 feet; thence North 89 degrees 28 minutes 10 seconds West, parallel with the South line of the North fractional 1/2 of said Northeast fractional 1/4, 434.00 feet; thence South 00 degrees 36 minutes 17 seconds West, 500.00 feet to said South line, thence North 89 degrees 28 minutes 10 seconds West, along said South line, 66.00 feet; thence North 00 degrees 36 minutes 17 seconds East, 1451.90 feet to the place of beginning. Commonly known as: 36862 49th Ave., Paw Paw, MI The redemption period shall be Six (6) months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be thirty (30) days from the date of such sale or when the time to provide the notice required by MCLA 600.3241a(c) expires, whichever is later or unless the redemption period is shortened in accordance with MCLA 600.3238. If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale, under MCLA 600.3278, the borrower and mortgagor will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention Homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Attention Purchasers: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. Shaheen, Jacobs & Ross, P.C. is a debt collector attempting to collect this debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. Dated: November 6, 2025 The Huntington National Bank, a national banking association Mortgagee SHAHEEN, JACOBS & ROSS, P.C. By: Michael J. Thomas, Esq. Attorneys for Mortgagee 615 Griswold Street, Suite 1425 Detroit, Michigan 48226-3993 (313) 963-1301
(11-13)(12-04)

BLOOMINGDALE TOWNSHIP NOW ACCEPTING BIDS

Bloomingdale Township is currently accepting bids for Janitorial Services Contractor at the Bloomingdale Municipal Center. Interested parties will need to be licensed and insured. Please contact Supervisor Matt Ashbrook or Clerk Melanie Kelly for project details. Please mail sealed bids to Bloomingdale Township, PO Box 11, Bloomingdale, MI 49026. Or, hand deliver to drop box or office located at 109 E. Kalamazoo St., Bloomingdale, MI 49026

M*elanie Kelly, Bloomingdale Township Clerk*

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE OF PERSONAL PROPERTY

Notice is hereby given that **The Shed Self Storage,** phone **(269) 200-2156**, located at **72819 M 40, Lawton, MI, 49065** will hold a Public Sale, to satisfy the lien of the owner. This notice is given in accordance with the provisions of Michigan Compiled Statutes 570.521 to 570.527. Units will be sold via online auction, at **www.LockerFox.com.** Auction will close on or after **Wednesday November 26, 2025 at 10:00 am.** The personal goods stored therein by the following may include, but are not limited to household goods, furniture, tools, equipment, toys, boxes, clothes and misc items. Owner reserves the right to bid and the right to refuse bids. Cleanup deposit is required. Sale is subject to cancellation. The contents of the rental storage units belonging to the following persons will be sold:
William Stayner
Paul Hatfield

BLOOMINGDALE TOWNSHIP NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Please take notice that Bloomingdale Township will conduct a Public Hearing on November 19,2025 at 6:30pm, at the Bloomingdale Municipal center, 109 E. Kalamazoo St., Bloomingdale, Michigan. The intent of the Public Hearing is to hear and Consider objections to the Special Assessment Tax Roll and proposed **renewal** of Eagle Lake Weed Control Project, and all other matters relating to the proposed **renewal** of the Eagle Lake Weed Control Project for the eradication and control of aquatic weeds. Plans and costs are on file with the Township Clerk, This Public Hearing will be held as required under Public Act 188 of 1954, as amended, to hear objections to the proposed project. This Special Assessment District will include all Eagle Lake property owners in Bloomingdale Township.

Melanie Kelly, Clerk
Bloomingdale Township

Gobles setter has a strong season

Kylee Killeen is a three-sport athlete at Gobles.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

GOBLES — Kylee Killeen had another strong season for Gobles' volleyball team.

"As a team, we had a tough season this year. It didn't go exactly as we hoped," Killeen said. "We started off strong, but the middle of the season was really rough. Toward the end, near districts, we began to play better and found our rhythm again, but ultimately, we fell short in the district semifinals.

"I had a pretty good season this year. I'm a setter and right-side hitter, so I was able to contribute in both setting up plays and scoring points. Throughout the season, I worked on improving my consistency and communication on the court. Even though we had some ups and downs as a team, I'm proud of how much I've grown and how we pushed through the challenges together."

Killeen felt she improved signficantly.

"This year, I think I improved a lot not only in my gameplay but also in my leadership role on the team," she said. "I became more confident in communicating on the court and encouraging my teammates, especially during tough matches.

"I was a leader on the team, and my teammates always relied on me to communicate and stay consistent. Whether it was calling out plays, keeping everyone focused, or lifting the team's energy after a tough point, I tried to set the tone both on and off the court."

Her role was similar to last season.

"Since we had a lot of the same girls returning, our chemistry was strong, and it made it easier to communicate and work together on the court," she said. "My fundamental strengths as a performer were my consistency, communication, and ability to stay composed under pressure. I was confident in my setting and hitting, and I always focused on making smart plays to help my teammates succeed. I also brought a lot of energy and encouragement to the team, which helped keep everyone focused and motivated during tough games.

"I worked a lot on my hitting this season, focusing on improving my timing, power, and placement. My most memorable moment this year was after a few tough weeks of not playing our best, our team came into the SAC crossover games with a new attitude and mindset. We played with more energy and confidence and were able to beat a team we had previously lost to earlier in the season. That win really showed how much we had grown and how strong we could be when we worked together."

There were various team highlights.

"Some team highlights this season were how we never gave up, no matter the score," Killeen said. "Even if we didn't win a game, we always fought hard until the very end. One moment that really showed our resilience was our game against Martin. We got beat pretty badly in the first set, but we came together, stayed focused, and were able to come back and win the third set. It really showed our teamwork and determination.

"I think that this year I met my expectations. My team this year has met my expectations."

Killeen also plays basketball and softball.

"My best sport is softball, and I'm excited to share that I will be attending Spring Arbor University next year to continue my softball career," she said. "It's always been a huge passion of mine, and I can't wait to keep growing as both an athlete and a teammate at the next level."

Bangor soccer coach happy with season

By John Raffel
Correspondent

BANGOR — Bangor soccer coach Antonio Robles was very happy with what his team achieved this season.

"Looking back on the 2025 season, I could not be prouder of this group of young men. We finished 6-12-3 overall, but our record only tells part of the story. This team showed heart, commitment, and belief in one another, and that carried us to a District Championship and a Regional Final appearance — milestones that reflect their hard work and growth.

Early on, injuries tested our depth and forced several players into new roles, but the boys refused to back down," Robles said.

"Our captains — Aiden Muñoz, Carlos Villalobos, and Aziel Calderon — led by example, keeping the team focused and positive through every challenge. Their leadership became the foundation that held us together during tough stretches in our SW10 Conference schedule, where we went 2-4-2 and finished third."

Players who earned well-deserved recognition for their dedication and performance:

SW10 1st Team: Carlos Villalobos, Anthony Villalobos

SW10 2nd Team: Allan Luna

SW10 Honorable Mention: Aiden Muñoz, Jose Maximiliano Gonzalez

All-District honors went to:

Carlos Villalobos (11th), Giovani Soriano-Ramirez (10th), Anthony Villalobos (11th), Aziel Calderon (10th), Allan Luna (12th), Quintin Goodman (10th), Emanuel Betarcourt (12th), Ismael Rodriguez (11th), and Jose Maximiliano Gonzalez (12th).

"All-Regional selections included Carlos Villalobos and Aziel Calderon, while Carlos also earned an All-State Honorable Mention — a tremendous accomplishment," Robles said. "Carlos Villalobos set the tone offensively and led with consistency, earning every accolade through determination and hard work. Anthony Villalobos and Allan Luna were also key contributors, not only with their performance but through their example and commitment.

"I want to give special recognition to sophomore Giovani Soriano-Ramirez, whose effort in the postseason was nothing short of remarkable," Robles said. "His game-winning goals in the district semifinals and finals, followed by his decisive strike in the regional semifinal, were season-defining moments that showcased his potential.

"We will miss our graduating seniors — Allan Luna, Aiden Muñoz, Emanuel Betarcourt, Alexander Cruz, Jose Marin, Enrique Macedo, Martin Gutierrez, Oscar Franco, and Jose Maximiliano Gonzalez. Their dedication, leadership, and influence helped shape our program and set a high standard for those who follow."

Robles added:

"The future is bright for Bangor soccer. With a strong group of returning players and an eager incoming class, the foundation for continued success is solid. The lessons learned this season — perseverance, adaptability, and teamwork — will carry this group far.

"As I complete my 13th year coaching this program, I am filled with pride and gratitude. This team overcame adversity, grew stronger together, and ended the season with a sense of accomplishment that numbers alone cannot measure. They did a great job overcoming challenges and finishing strong, and I am honored to be part of their journey."

Volleyball teams end seasons

By John Raffel
Correspondent

PAW PAW — Paw Paw's volleyball team ended its season at 9-19-2 with a loss to Three Rivers in the district first round last week.

The scores were 25-12, 25-11, 25-21.

Coach Haley Rocks' Red Wolves had a 25-23 25-21 win over Decatur in the Red Arrow tournament as a highlight to the season.

Lawrence's season ended with a 2-18 record. The team had wins over Covert and Eau Claire.

Lawrence lost to Martin 25-9, 25-6, 25-9 in the districts.

Lawton ended its season at 11-15-3 after losing 25-16, 25-7, 25-17 to Kalamazoo Christian in the district semifinals

Lawton earlier had a 23-25, 25-23, 25-23, 25-19 district fist round win over Comstock.

Lawton falls in district finals

By John Raffel
Correspondent

LAWTON — Lawton's football season came to an end in the second week off the playoffs with a 26-0 loss to Schoolcraft in Friday's district title game.

Lawton's season ends at 7-4. Schoolcraft takes a 9-2 record into the regional title game on Friday.

Schoolcraft scored in the first quarter for a 6-0 lead on a 13-yard run.

Dave Ostend had a 49-yard interception return for a touchdown in the second quarter and Jack DeVries passed five yards to Evan Feller to make it 19-0 at halftime.

DeVries had a 11-yard pass to Dave Enright in the third quarter to make it 26-0.

Schoolcraft had a 302-269 lead in total yards over Lawton which lost three fumbles and threw two pass interceptions.

Brady Quick passed for 125 yards on seven pass completions. His longest was for 41 yards.

Hudson Merriman caught five passes for 117 yards. He rushed five times for 44 yards.

Advertisement for Bids

BID PROPOSAL

Sealed bids, in triplicate, for Bid Pack 7: Early & Later Elementary Mechanical Upgrades, Transportation Building Renovation, Maintenance Building Reroof, Paw Paw Public Schools will be received until 11:00 AM local time, Tuesday November 25th, 2025 at the Paw Paw Public Schools Administration Building, 119 Johnson Rd, Paw Paw, MI 49079 Bids received after this time will neither be considered nor accepted.

All proposals received by the time and date stated above will be opened and read publicly at 11:00 AM local time, Tuesday November 25th, 2025 119 Johnson Rd, Paw Paw, MI 49079

Bids may be mailed or dropped off to O-A-K's Kalamazoo Office, 2700 Stadium Dr., Kalamazoo, MI 49008. Mailed or dropped off bids must be received by Monday, November 24th, by 4:00 PM. FAXED, EMAILED OR UPLOADED TO BUILDING CONNECTED BIDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

In accordance with Section 1267 of the Revised School Code each bid must be accompanied by a sworn and notarized Familial Disclosure Statement completed by the bidder disclosing any familial relationship between the Owner or any employee of the Bidder and any member of the District's Board of Education or the Superintendent of the District.

SITE INSPECTION

A construction pre-bid meeting will be held at Paw Paw Transportation Building – 636 E Main St. Paw Paw, MI 49079,
2:30 PM local time, Wednesday November 12th, 2025. All bidders are encouraged to attend.

BID DOCUMENTS

The Bidding Documents may be examined at the following locations:

- Owen-Ames-Kimball Co. Website: http://www.owen-ames-kimball.com/subcontractors/
- Builders Exchange plan rooms in Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Lansing and Traverse City.

BIDDER QUALIFICATIONS

Bidders submitting a Bid for this Project shall have qualifications as follows:

a. Shall be a reputable, recognized organization, with at least five (5) years successful experience on work of this type and scope of this project.

b. Shall have a license where required by public authorities having jurisdiction.

c. Shall have ample financial resources for work of this magnitude.

BID SECURITY - PERFORMANCE BONDS

Each bid shall be accompanied by good and sufficient bid security or bid bond in an amount not less than 5% of the Bid amount and shall secure the Owner from loss or damage by reason of the withdrawal of the Bid by a Bidder or by failure of the successful Bidder to enter into a Contract with the Owner if his Bid is accepted by the Owner.

Bid securities will not be released or returned until the bid "hold-firm" date or a subcontract has been successfully executed for the specific bid category of work, whichever occurs first.

Bid security may be provided by furnishing a bond from a surety company having a rating of A- or better or certified check. Owen-Ames-Kimball is not responsible for the loss of bid security if provided by certified check.

The successful Bidder will be required to secure Performance, Labor and Material bonds for all contracts exceeding $50,000, from a surety company having a rating of A- or better, for the full amount of the Contract.

For questions, please contact Owen-Ames-Kimball Co. at 269-276-9700.

BUILD TOGETHER
PAW PAW PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BLOOMINGDALE TOWNSHIP INVITATION TO BID

The Township of Bloomingdale will be accepting sealed bids for Seasonal Mowing/ Plowing of the listed properties for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 seasons. This will be a two-year contract beginning April 1, 2026 through March 31, 2028. Bids should also include Seasonal Snowplowing of the Fire Station property, Bear Lake access, Muskrat Lake access, Mud Lake Drive, and the Municipal Building parking lot behind the building for the 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 seasons.

Plowing

- Plow Fire Station whenever 3 inches or more of snow falls.
- Plow Muskrat and Bear Lake Fire Lane accesses whenever 6 inches of snow falls.
- Plow Mud Lake Drive whenever 3 inches or more of snow falls.
- Plow back parking lot of Municipal Building whenever 3 inches or more of snow falls.
- Front and sidewalks of Municipal Building must be shoveled whenever 3 inches of snow falls

Mowing

- Mowing Fire Station when grass reaches between 3-4 inches
- Spring and Fall Clean-up at Fire Station

The Township Board reserves the right to reject any or all bids. Bids must be listed at a per year rate for both mowing and plowing. Proof of Insurance must be provided with bid. Bids will be opened and contract awarded during the Regular Board Meeting of Bloomingdale Township Board at 7:00 p.m., December 17, 2025.

Send (or drop off) sealed bids to Bloomingdale Township office by 12:00 p.m. on December 17, 2025. For more information, contact the Bloomingdale Township office, 109 E. Kalamazoo Street, P.O. Box 11, Bloomingdale, MI 49026, or by phone Matthew Ashbrook (269) 521-3800 ext. 1.

Melanie Kelly, Clerk

• CLASSIFIEDS •

• WANTED •

WE BUY OLD BASEBALL CARDS, OTHER SPORTS MEMORABILIA AND OLD VINTAGE COINS. CAN BE REACHED AT 517-416-1629. WE PAY CASH.

CLARK'S AUTO PARTS, INC. is buying cars, trucks & all metals for recycling. Lawrence, 674-4905 or 1-800-707-8650.

STANDING TIMBER. Top Michigan lumber manufacturer seeking landowners with 25 or more mature hardwood trees to sell. Qualityhardwoodsinc.com • 517-566-8061.

• SERVICES •

TIM'S STUMP GRINDING SERVICE- I believe in respectable service. 269-299-5052, 269-624-6884.

HAULING, CLEANING RECYCLING. Moving service. Right Quick Hauling. Dan Wydick, Dustin Wydick, Daniel Wydick, 423-8545. Serving since 1994.

FIELD PLUMBING & HEATING, INC. Services all brands of heating & cooling equipment in your home or business. 24/7 service for over 50 years, 269-674-3839.

BUYING JUNK CARS, trucks, scrap metal and farm machinery. Kalamazoo Metal Recyclers, 1525 King Highway, Kalamazoo. 269-381-1315.

PRO HANDYMAN SERVICE SOUTH HAVEN AREA Call 269-903-6397.

• HOUSING •

TWO BEDROOM RIVERFRONT APARTMENT FOR RENT, NEWLY REMODELED, $1000 per month plus utilities, $1500 deposit. Must provide proof of income. No pets. 1 year lease. Rental references and background check required. 269-720-4856.

MEDICARE GURU
Call
Janet Bontrager
Insurance Advisor
(269) 998-6977

Paw Paw Police receive tactical ballistic shields through American Legion fundraiser

PAW PAW - The Paw Paw Police Department has announced the acquisition of new tactical ballistic shields, made possible through funds raised by the members of the American Legion McGowan-Johnson Post 68.

"This generous contribution underscores the strong partnership between local veterans and law enforcement, united in their commitment to community safety," said Bob Adams, a member of the American Legion McGowan-Johnson Post 68.

The new tactical shields will provide enhanced protection for officers during high-risk operations. Lightweight yet durable, the shields are designed to improve both safety and mobility in critical circumstances.

"We are deeply grateful to the members of American Legion Post 68 for their generosity and continued support," said Eric Rottman, Chief of the Paw Paw Police Department. "Their dedication to our officers' safety ensures we can better protect the residents of our community. This is an outstanding example of local service organizations making a real difference."

The fundraising effort organized by American Legion McGowan-Johnson Post 68 reflects the post's ongoing mission to serve and support those who protect the community. "Supporting our local police department allows us to continue our mission of service beyond the uniform," said Adams. "We are proud to stand with our local law enforcement officers and help provide the tools they need to stay safe while keeping our community secure." Adams also said that the American Legion McGowan-Johnson Post 68 intends to continue the fundraiser with hopes to provide tactical shields to other smaller departments in the area that do not have the resources to purchase tactical shields.

"The Paw Paw Police Department extends its heartfelt thanks to the American Legion McGowan-Johnson Post 68 and all community members who contributed to this effort. Their generosity has a lasting impact on officer safety and public protection," said Police Chief Rottman.

Paw Paw Community Chorus plans Christmas Concert

PAW PAW - The Paw Paw Community Chorus will present the 25th annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 4 p.m., at the Paw Paw United Methodist Church, 420 W. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw. The chorus, under the direction of Theresa Vaughn, will be accompanied on piano by Evonne Heystek.

The following selections will be presented by the chorus: "We Are Waiting" bym Sally K. Albrecht, Charles Wesley, and Jay Althouse, "There Is Faint Music" by Nancy Buckley and Dan Forrest, "Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song) by Amy Grant and Chris Eaton/ Arr. by Roger Emerson, "Hark, the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes" by Mary Lynn Lightfoot, "Bring Us Hope" by Ruth Elaine Schram, "In December" by Jay Althouse, "Sending You a Little Christmas" by Jim Brickman, Victoria Shaw and Billy Mann/Arr. by Jay Althouse, "On With the Snow" (A Medley of 'Sleigh Ride,' 'Winter Wonderland,' and 'Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!')/Arr. by Douglas E Wagner, and "Ring in the Holidays" by Greg Gilpin.

Members of the chous include Sharilyn Angell, Jennifer Antisdale, Jami Bond, Barbara Bryant, Leslie Buhl, William Buhl, Jackie Coons, Becky Elmore, Terry Goetsch, Judy Halseth, Jil Hoekstra, Sue S. Knudstrup, Jane Makowski, Wynonia Mankowski, Joyk Martin, Kathy McCloskey, Stephen McCloskey, Margaret McNeil, Jon Mills, Viva Nelson, Jan Ogden, Lenore Orozco, Loise Perkins, Cayla Perry, Pat Peters, E. Ike Porter, Joy Porter, Lois Richardson, Connie Ruch, Bruce Safbom, Leonda Kessinger Shroyer, Marcia Sikkema, Michele Sivley, Gerry Stackhouse, Marlene Stoops, Doris Stratton, Fran Van Meter, Anna Vervoort, Kathy Weisner, Grace Zimmerman, and Eleda Zygadlo.

For more information, contact Joy Martin at (231) 577-8334, Bruce Safbom at (630) 817-0100, or Theresa Vaughn at (269) 668-4631.

Gold Star banner presented at Operation Holiday Cheer

PAW PAW - A Gold Star Banner was presented on Saturday, Nov. 8, to the newest Blue Star Mother Member of Southwest Michigan 179. The Gold Star Banner represents Robyn Wixom's son, Cole T. Wixom, who was killed in a training accident in January 2019.

The Blue Star Banner was designed and patented by Army Captain Robert L. Queisser of the 5th Ohio Infantry in honor of the military services of his two sons serving on the frontlines during World War I. The banner, also referred to as a flag, quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in service.

The Service Banner is an official banner authorized by the Department of Defense for display by families with a family member serving in the Armed Forces during any period of war or hostilities the United States may be engaged in for the duration of such hostilities. The immediate family members, such as spouse, parents, children and siblings and that includes steps and adopted. A business or organization may also post the banner in their window recognizing members of their organization that are currently serving. Only the above people are authorized to display the banner.

In 2007, Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., was entrusted with the honor of presenting the Gold Star Banner to the families of the Fallen. Each chapter has a choice to participate in the program. If they choose to do so, a Blue to Gold Liaison is designated among their members and registered with the National Board. When a chapter is made aware of a military loss in their area either by the National 3 Vice President or in a state with a department, the notice would come from the 3VP from the Department Board. Or through their own network with the veteran and military community, they reach out to the Casualty Assistant Officer (CAO) to find out if the family would like to receive the banner. The decision to receive and how they will receive the Gold Star Banner is always at the wishes of the family.

If the family desires to receive the banner. The chapter liaison orders it for them. One for a wife, if there is one, one for the parents, unless they are divorced. In that case a banner is ordered for each parent, so up to three banners may be ordered for each Fallen Hero's family. Then working with the CAO, a time and place to do the presentation is arranged and the presentation is done.

The design has significance. The Red Border stands for the blood that has been shed in defense of our nation. The White Field, for the purity of spirit for the price of peace. The Blue Star is for loyalty, honor and duty and the Gold Star for valor and sacrifice. The Gold Star is slightly smaller than the Blue. When it is placed over the Blue Star at the death of the service member, some of the blue is still visible. That visible border of blue on the Gold Star represents the fact that Fallen Hero will always be remembered.

Each blue star on the flag represents a service member in active duty. A gold star is displayed if a service member is killed in action or dies in service. If several stars are displayed by one family, the Gold Star takes the honor of being displayed on top. As many as five stars may be on one banner.

The Wixom's youngest son, Trace, is currently serving in the United States Army. A banner showing both stars was also presented to Robyn.

The flags can be purchased online, at stores or be made by hand.

Sloppy Joe fundraiser dinner to be held Nov. 18

DECATUR - The Gold Star Family Memorial Monument Committee - Paw Paw, will host a Sloppy Joe Fundraiser Dinner, Tuesday, Nov. 18, at the Decatur VFW Post 6248, 560 N. Phelps, Decatur, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

The dinner will consist of a sloppy joe and chips for $8.

The committee's goal is to establish a Gold Star Families Memorial monument in Paw Paw. The proposed site location is at Maple City Veterans Memorial Park, 510 E. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw.

Donations for the monument may be sent to: Woody Williams Foundation, 12123 Shelbyville Rd, Suite 100, Louisville, KY 40243. On the memo line, write: PAW PAW, MI, so it will be utilized for the project and not the foundation's general fund. Individuals may donate through the QR Code.

Gold Star Families Memorial Monument
A tribute to
Gold Star Families and Relatives
who sacrificed a Loved One for our Freedom.

SCAN ME

ROYAL WEED
ROYALWEEDMI.COM
(269)415-0675
42800 W RED ARROW HWY PAW PAW MI 49079
Danksgiving Deals
WE DELIVER WIN 15 MILE RADIUS!
BUY 2 GET 1 INFUSED PREROLLS AND INFUSED PREROLL PACKS
2 FOR $22 GRIP 1 GRAM LIVE RESIN/LIQUID DIAMONDS DISPOSABLES
THANKFUL EIGHTHS 4/$49
$0.01 PREROLL WITH ANY PURCHASE
WHILE SUPPLIES LAST.
CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE FOR ADDITIONAL POP UP SPECIALS AT ROYALWEEDMI.COM
(269)415-0675. 42800 W RED ARROW HWY PAW PAW, MI 49079

Make room for what matters most.

6-MONTH INTRODUCTORY RATE

4.99%* APR

HOME EQUITY LINE OF CREDIT

Don't miss out on this special offer—contact your local mortgage lender to get started today!

Krissy Larson
AVP, Mortgage Lender
South Haven Banking Center
NMLS #1512757
(269) 637-6644

Jennifer Postello
AVP, Mortgage Lender
South Haven Banking Center
NMLS #533603
(269) 214-6501

Heather Scruggs
Mortgage Lender
Bangor Banking Center
NMLS #2013219
(269) 427-7941

Member FDIC

www.Sturgis.Bank/heloc-special

STURGIS BANK

*APR = Annual Percentage Rate. Introductory interest rate of 4.99% APR is good for a period of 6 months. Thereafter, the interest rate will adjust to Prime Rate published in the Wall Street Journal minus 0.15% to plus 0.75% based on credit history. Prime Rate as of 11/01/2025 is 7.00%. Interest rate adjusts monthly with a minimum interest rate of 5.00%. $50 Annual fee applies. Minimum loan amount $5,000. All loans are subject to having a Sturgis Bank checking account and credit approval. Sturgis Bank NMLS #407562.